

Nantes & Bradford.

~~describing the Provincial Towns of England & France.~~

described Nantes as a town of many women,
but that much yet remains to be said on the
subject. In the first place, though the Bank Holiday
and the early closing movement have in some
way given the English clerk, artizan, & labourer
an advantage over his French fellow, in this
the latter are by far the most privileged of the
workmen. This is to be expected in a democratic
country, instruction & amusement are
more equally distributed, & less distinction
less observable. Our workmen get
higher wages & more holidays; but alas!
what avail are these without the opportunity
of ~~more~~ fully employing them?" * * * *

"The French workman - and why should
not the English do so too? - does really
improve the opportunities of instruction
held out to him, & will readily seize upon
intellectual amusement & recreation
if put in his way." * * * *

"You want to read at a library or study
a certain science, we have to go to London;
but at Nantes, a city of 118,000 odd
inhabitants, we find every opportunity of
instruction the ordinary student may
require."

(10) "The principle centralization does not exist
to anything like the same extent as with us."

A Writer in Nantes; from A Year in Brittany.

It is a pleasure to meet with a book of travel
which ~~affords~~ ^{affords} ~~more~~ ^{more} insight into the ~~status~~
of the people & the character of the country than

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Author undertaken to describe, & a carefully
written work like that cited above calls for our
gratitude. Doubtless the information about
Western France is as reliable as it is plenarily
given, but, possibly, in the comparison between
French & English towns the latter suffer considerably
that, however, as a rule, outsiders don't
know much about the internal economy of
our large northern & midland towns. We
know of Manchester & Liverpool as immense
cities, having, each, something like three-quarters
of a million inhabitants, from which
anything may be expected in the way of
advanced institutions &c. &c. ahead progress; but
our knowledge ends, save where it ends with
those imprecise & much busk & noisy
smoke, of the 'whirr, whirr' of many wheels,
& the 'loud, churning tide' of much traffic.
Birmingham, the great midland metropolis,
fares a little better in the matter of population
entered in the sale of its manifold seasons
manufactures; but, as a fact, we estimate
our great towns, but not for themselves,
but simply as the centres of various industries,
& the seats of vast populations which we think
of with pity as housed in their narrow streets.
Yet the student feels that the annals of
the great mediæval towns, Bruges &
Freiburg, Florence or Genoa, as heroic, of the
nature of poetry; though these, also, were in their
day but great commercial & manufacturing
centres, densely peopled, even in the frontiers.

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Century when there were fewer people in the world.
Their distinctive industries have passed away;
no longer do forty thousand weavers pass
daily through the streets of Bruges; the arsies
of Genoa span the seas no more; delicate
napery, & velvets, & the fine broadcloths of
ancient Mechlin are, to-day, produced
elsewhere; yet the interest which ~~attaches to~~
these cities is not transferred, because it
pertains to the life of the past, to the development
of the people rather than to the utilities they
effected.

The cities of the Hansa, like the forty republics
of northern Italy, were all free towns; no feudal
lordship overshadowed them, no remote
State authority directed their public works;
therefore each city
developed

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developed according to the mind & fits own
people; customs, laws, edifices, all expressed what
may be called the municipal character, the
sense of the community as to what was fitting
for such & such purposes & occasions. And
hence every stone of the antique civil building,
every shred of tradition as to the old customs,
is full of interest as showing us what manner
of men these medieval citizens were.

So the great cities of our day offer any parallel
to those of the Middle Ages in this point of
autonomy, the self-government & self-
development which gives to a great town
philosophic interest, as being, in its institutions
& edifices, as in its customs, the outcome
of the common mind?

He glances at the principal cities of the
States of ~~the~~ ^{of continental} Europe; for the most part,
those of the past are richly individual; those
of the present display the dreary uniformity,
often splendid enough, which bespeaks
State organization, magnificent streets,
public promenades, municipal buildings,
always for the same purposes & upon
pattern.

At home, it is otherwise; a British town
presents a sort of countenance, expressive
of the nature & uses fits denizens. Are
the town-hall, the schools, hospitals, libraries,
splendid or mean, in proportion to the wealth
displayed in the private dwellings? The church,
we don't speak of, for that has usually another
history

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history. Are there well-kept public parks: are the streets & markets sweet & clean? Do active institutions provide for the blind or the dumb, the orphan or widow? When this sort of self-government obtains, the fact is due to the great liberality of the towns-folk, to their fine quality which we call 'public-spirit', and to the maternal benevolence & munificence of the state. For our English towns practically govern themselves, develop themselves according to their own needs & ideas; like the great cities of the Netherlands, they are Free Towns: free states within a free state, commonwealths within a commonwealth, they do what they will with their own. Their light subjection to the state does not deprive them of their scope, wider interests & able protection; while it is less a hindrance or means of oppression than were the commercial leagues which the cities of the Middle Ages voluntarily entered into.

It would appear that this self-government is necessary to the spontaneous growth of towns; as we have seen, it was the condition under which the great trading cities of the past prospered, & the large provincial towns of England did not grow into power & prominence until aristocratic domination had ceased with the decay of the feudal system, & autocracy

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expired with the
had died out with the last of the royal Tudors,
not until Oliver Cromwell had asserted, once for all,
the sovereign pre-eminence of the people.
It is because the two rest upon principles
fundamentally different that we are feelings
pang damaging comparison of the provincial
towns of England with those of France: in the one
case, the institutions ~~exist~~ ^{exist} ~~act~~ ^{over the public amusements} in the
public edifices ^{of art.} ~~art.~~ to a large extent, ~~private~~
by the State; while, in the other, the townfolk
evolve & produce as greater needs & higher
aspirations ~~move~~ ^{move} them. In this matter
of municipal organization, France has, of late
years, taken a lead which several European
States are ~~ever~~ ^{now} following; our towns &
modernized cities, more or less after the
pattern of Paris, are appearing everywhere,
even great capitals like Berlin & Vienna
represent the type; but it appears in its
crudest, least attractive form in the
~~numerous~~ ^{numerous} ~~small~~ ^{with the} ~~new-made~~ ^{new-made} towns scattered
over the Russian plains, each with admiss-
ibly wide, straight streets, lofty buildings
& staff of ~~municipal~~ ^{municipal} officials, with ~~nothing~~
in fact, but the population & the industries
which should effect the aggregation known
as a 'town.' It is to be observed that
in the towns of this new style are usually
the ~~work~~, not of a township, but of the ^a State;
& in effect it matters very little whether
the powers for such 'central organization' be
in the hands of a republican or a monarchical
government; the specific influence upon
local activity ^{in both cases} remains the same.

We are inclined, therefore, to cherish the principle of local organization, &c to look upon the growth from English towns as a healthy outcome of national life. But a grave question presents itself. Is it a fact that the inhabitants of a French town are, in the whole, better off than those of an English town of equal standing? Miss Edwards appears to think so. Her opinion of a typical French city is plainly the result of careful & judicious observation: She points out several particulars in which she considers the ~~French~~ to be more favorably placed than are the dwellers in similar provincial towns in England. Let us take an English town which offers a fair parallel to ~~French~~ & examine how it stands in these particulars.

We select Bradford, chiefly because it has been, of late, a good deal before the public. It is true that Bradford has a population of 180,000 against 118,000 for ~~French~~, but, France being an agricultural country, the population of its towns is never ~~so~~ ^{in the case} excessive as in England. On the other hand, ~~French~~ is a ~~east~~-provincial capital, ~~so called~~ ~~imported to a city of the country~~, whereas Bradford is within ten miles of Leeds, with a population of 309,000, the largest town in Yorkshire; within fifty of Sheffield, which has 284,000 inhabitants, ~~surpassing~~ about forty of Manchester & Liverpool; then, ~~whatever~~ ^{means of} dignity & importance it has arrived at

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is not due to ~~any pretence~~ it holds, or the principal town of a ~~the~~ considerable district.

Bradford lies in an elbow of the Aire valley which is known as Bradford Dale, surrounded by ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ amphitheatre of hills; rather the ~~rest~~ ^{rest} of the town is in the valley while the ~~suburb~~ ^{suburban} parts & some of the principal streets climb the slopes of the hills. It is entirely a manufacturing town, from any over-looking hill-side, one may reckon scores of factory chimneys, & seen from such a point of view the town ^{usually} ~~generally~~ lies under a heavy smoke cloud. Never is the pleasant, well-built suburbs, the inhabitants commonly keep their windows sealed as a defence against the all-pervading smells. But having said this, we have said the worst of Bradford; for a manufacturing town, it is ^{fairly} ~~really~~ attractive & pleasant as a place of residence. It is seldom that the fine air off the moors is perceptibly vitiated by the heavy factory odours; most of the mills are in parts of the town but little frequented, so that the main thoroughfares are simply streets of good shops; while Manningham & Horton, the two semi-detached suburbs ~~the manufacturing parts~~ ^{in the central part} of Bradford, have in those handsome villas the manufacturers & merchants live, as excellently placed both as regards effect & the conditions of health. Manningham especially, which is ~~as~~ ^{like} Clifton, has a really fine ~~education~~ ^{communion}

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commanding the ~~open~~ ^{Shawbury} Valley & the hills on
the further side. It is true these cars are
enough; but a hill is a hill, & a green slope
is pleasant to look upon, though it be almost
destitute of trees. There quarries near the
sides of the cliff, sit is scored by straight
rows of cottages to exact line of the
growing quarry, you get one of the raw & bold
effects proper to the Yorkshire Moors.

On the whole, the aspect of Bradford is one of
quiet respectability, if not of splendor. It
has the air of Scotch rather than of English
town, & there is little that is ~~handsome~~ ^{handsome} ~~or~~ ^{or} ~~handsome~~
in the buildings, the shops, or the
dress, even of the general operations.

Two circumstances conduce to this propriety
of appearance. In the first place, every, even
cottage, building, every wall, is off-white
smooth-hewn stone, the excellent building
stone which forms the substance of most of
the surrounding hills. As this is a material
which does not lend itself to vagaries with
the readiness of timber, the dwelling-homes
are neat & substantial; ~~and~~ ^{also} large enough
for effect, and comely structures of white, where
ornament is used in the public buildings
it is ~~so~~ ^{so} chose & appropriate in kind.

The Merchants' Warehouses are imposing &
beautiful buildings, very large, very high, &
finely finished, though simple in style as
befits their purpose; they ^{have a certain} give an indescribable
look of substance to the town. The old factories
are black & ugly enough, but some of the newer
mills are really handsome; ~~the S. C. Litter~~
^{an} ~~one~~ ^{one} ~~common~~

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manufacturing for silk & velvet goods, built
entirely of brown stone, & with a continuous
frontage of 1,000 feet, is, perhaps, the grandest
~~containing~~ ¹⁰ ~~tafferies~~ - like towers rising
above the rest of the building, adding much to the
general effect. We have not space to speak of
the Exchange, Banks, Markets, & other handsome
public buildings; but the Town Hall is interesting
as putting forth a claim on the part of Bradford
to be ranked with the ^{best} towns of the Middle Ages.
to each of which ~~of course~~ ^{is} ~~noted~~ as well
~~with~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~other~~ ~~towns~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~part~~

It is built in the mediæval style, & has
a tall clock-tower with belfry above like that of
the Campanile Vecchio at Florence; more than
that, it has Chimes, - a really fine set; &
the deep-toned musical bells strike in the
evening air, you may close your eyes
& conceive yourself listening to the carillons
of Bruges, or other dim city of the past.

The capital quiet & placid days, rich; picture
quaint; music-schops, furnish good things
in every kind of need, except luxury &
refinement, but the habits & requirements of
rich people are much the same everywhere.
In all large towns, there are, too, narrow paved
lanes where ragged children swarm, &
where there is a prevailing odour of stale fish;
Bradford can only claim to be not
worse than other towns in this respect; she
has her full share of wretched alleys.